
Herbert Hoover National Historic Site



General Management Plan and Environmental Assessment

April 2004

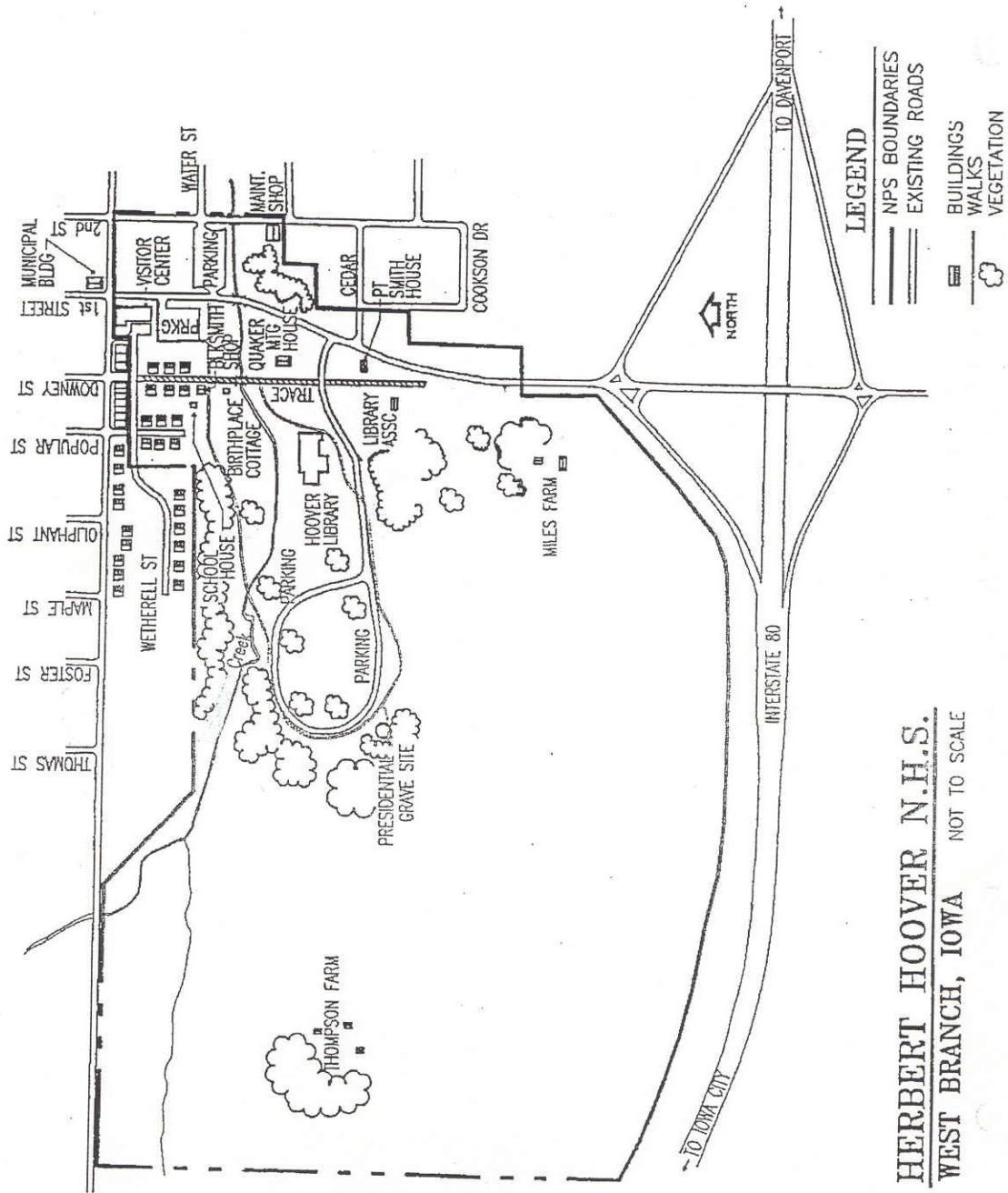


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PREAMBLE

He was a man of remarkable achievements and a succession of careers. A mining engineer and businessman whose far-flung enterprises touched six continents before World War I. A humanitarian whose name came to represent the staff of life to millions of human beings afflicted by famine and by war. An indefatigable traveler who spent more than two years of his adulthood at sea and who circled the globe five times before the advent of aviation. A prodigious worker, a translator of scientific treatise, an historian and philanthropist, the author of numerous books and hundreds of articles and speeches. An administrator, a Cabinet secretary, president of the United States. An elder statesman who, by the time he died, had lived nearly half as long as the American Republic. A life that began as a son of pioneers on the American prairie nine years after the Civil War.¹

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This *General Management Plan/Environmental Assessment* defines the direction for Herbert Hoover National Historic Site for the next 15-20 years. The general management plan represents the primary planning document for the National Park Service. The approved plan will provide a framework for decisions about ways to ensure the preservation of the park's cultural and natural resources and to provide high quality visitor experiences. The completed plan will establish a basis for decision-making to achieve defined long-term management goals.

Herbert Hoover National Historic Site (Historic Site), a 186.80 acre tract of land in the town of West Branch, Iowa (West Branch), includes the birthplace of President Herbert Hoover, the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library-Museum (HHPL), the Gravesite of President and Mrs. Hoover, the site of a house in which Hoover lived in West Branch from 1879 until 1884, a Friends (Quaker) Meeting House, a representation of his father's Blacksmith Shop, a Schoolhouse, and several late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century houses and outbuildings.

Additional resources include an unnamed branch of the Wapsinonoc Creek (for reference purposes, we will refer to this branch as "Hoover Creek"), the Isaac Miles Farm, an eighty-one acre reconstructed tallgrass prairie, the Thompson Farm, maintenance facility, visitor center, picnic area, parking areas, and open space. The Historic Site also includes Parkside Drive, which connects West Branch with Interstate 80, and the Loop Road, which connects Parkside Drive with the HHPL and the Gravesite.

The Historic Site is located in Cedar County, Iowa, on the southern edge of West Branch. It is 10 miles east of Iowa City, 34 miles southeast of Cedar Rapids, and 46 miles west of Davenport. The Historic Site is in the Second Congressional District.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR A GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

¹George H. Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover. The Engineer, 1874-1914* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1983), 1.

The Historic Site has operated under a 1970 *Master Plan* and a 1978 *Addendum* that do not adequately address current levels of visitation and patterns of visitor use. In the early 1990's, a major expansion of the HHPL and the revival of West Branch's downtown commercial district increased visitation and length of visits to the Historic Site. Special programs and exhibits at the HHPL attract many repeat visitors. Successful visits to the area depend upon orientation to the many opportunities available at the HHPL, the Historic Site, and West Branch. Increased visitation has brought greater traffic volume and increased traffic congestion to the Historic Site. The separate entrance roads and parking lots for the HHPL and the visitor center confuse many drivers.

The Historic Site has additional deficiencies with two of its primary facilities. The maintenance facility stands within the 5-year regulatory flood plain of "Hoover Creek" and has flooded nine times in eleven years including five 100-year floods. Those events hinder efficiency and effectiveness of the maintenance program and damage equipment. The visitor center does not have sufficient space to accommodate orientation, museum exhibits, fee collection, special exhibits, cooperating sales, an interpretive film, and interpretive programs. The visitor center is also within the 10-year regulatory flood plain of "Hoover Creek".

PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF HERBERT HOOVER NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Based on the Historic Site's legislation and legislative history, the planning team defined the following purpose and significance statements.

Congress authorized the Historic Site on August 12, 1965, through **Public Law 89-119 (79 Stat. 510)**. This legislation authorized the acquisition and development of lands in the City of West Branch to "preserve in public ownership historically significant properties associated with the life of Herbert Hoover." **Public Law 89-119** authorized the transfer of all federal property to the NPS with the exception of the HHPL. The law also authorized the acquisition of additional property to enlarge and develop the Historic Site. The NPS established the Historic Site on August 17, 1972.

Purpose

- Preserve the Birthplace Cottage, Gravesite, and other historically significant properties associated with the life of Herbert Hoover.
- Provide an accessible, dignified, and spacious setting in which visitors can experience the Birthplace Cottage, Gravesite, Presidential Library-Museum, and other resources.
- Commemorate and interpret the life, career, and accomplishments of Herbert Hoover in cooperation with other organizations.

Significance

- Herbert Hoover National Historic Site is the birthplace and site of the formative years that set Herbert Hoover on the road to becoming the nation's 31st President and a global humanitarian.
- From his birth to age 11, Herbert Hoover's experiences and associations with his family and the community of West Branch influenced his personality, work ethic, spiritual and moral character, and ambition. These strong traits are evident throughout his public service and private endeavors.
- Herbert Hoover National Historic Site memorializes Herbert Hoover by encompassing his Birthplace Cottage, Gravesite, Presidential Library-Museum, Friends Meeting House, Blacksmith Shop, Schoolhouse, statue of Isis, tallgrass prairie, and a branch of the Wapsinonoc Creek in a dignified setting in the town of West Branch, Iowa.
- The involvement of Herbert Hoover, Lou Henry Hoover, their family, friends, and the community was a driving force for the establishment, design, and management of Herbert Hoover National Historic Site. In this spirit of cooperation, the NPS facilitates the stewardship of this commemorative site.

ALTERNATIVES

The management alternatives describe overall management concepts and the alternate ways in which the Historic Site would apply the management prescriptions.

MANAGEMENT ZONES

The management zones, or management areas, identify how the Historic Site would manage different areas to achieve a combination of desired resource conditions and visitor experiences. The planning team developed the following management prescriptions for the Historic Site:

- Commemorative Zone
- Cultural Zone
- Development Zone
- Maintenance Zone
- Natural Zone
- Open Space Zone
- Orientation Zone
- Recreation Zone
- Special Use Zone

The location and size of each management zone would depend upon the overall emphasis of each alternative.

FORMULATION OF ALTERNATIVES

The planning team developed the management alternatives, including the preferred alternative, based on the issues or concerns, desired future conditions, and visitor experiences articulated by the general public, NPS staff, subject-matter specialists, park users, and the neighboring community of West Branch. The alternatives describe the overall management concepts and the alternative ways in which the Historic Site would apply the management zones to specific areas.

ALTERNATIVE A (PREFERRED)

This alternative is both the preferred and environmentally preferred alternative and the emphasis would be on commemorating the cultural heritage and life of President Herbert Hoover. Natural and cultural resources would serve as symbols of significant events and influences on the character and career of this great American. The interpretation program would provide the public with opportunities to use the Historic Site's tangible resources and Servicewide themes to make personal connections to the significance of the Hoover story and heritage of the area. Programs would provide new and innovative ways to present President Hoover's contributions to the U.S. and the World while maintaining the park's natural and cultural resources. The landscape and visitor facilities would support a commemorative-like atmosphere with opportunities for the public to spend time reflecting upon the life and significance of Herbert Hoover.

As the environmentally preferred alternative, the preservation of the cultural landscape, as identified by President Hoover, and associated historic structures maintains and provides an appropriate and safe setting for the public to understand and appreciate his birthplace. Restoration of the native prairie and removal of modern facilities from the floodplain will preserve important aspects of both natural and cultural resources while providing a wide choice of activities in a protected environment. These activities will ensure the continued existence and access to important historical and natural resources for many generations to come.

Estimated development costs for this alternative would total approximately \$3.5 million, including the rehabilitation of the Visitor Center, Laban Miles house, P.T. Smith house, and Varney house, and the construction of a new Maintenance Facility. These facility improvements and new construction would cost an additional \$8,000 a year to operate and maintain. This alternative would require 6.67 FTE of additional staff with an annual cost of \$250,000.

ALTERNATIVE B

This alternative would emphasize the commemoration of Herbert Hoover. Natural and cultural resources would serve as symbols of significant events and influences on the character and career of this great American. The interpretation program would provide the public with opportunities to use the Historic Site's tangible resources to make personal connections to the significance of the Hoover story. The NPS would collaborate with partners such as the Hoover Presidential Library to create a comprehensive

experience for visitors to gain understanding of the resources and significance of the complex. The landscape and visitor facilities would support the commemorative-like atmosphere with opportunities for the public to spend time reflecting upon the life and significance of Herbert Hoover.

Estimated development costs for this alternative would total approximately \$4.9 million, including the rehabilitation of the Visitor Center, P.T. Smith house, Varney house, and the construction of a new Maintenance Facility and a new Orientation Center with new parking and road connections between the center and historic site. These facility improvements and new construction would cost an additional \$10,000 a year to operate and maintain. This alternative would require 7.67 FTE of additional staff with an annual cost of \$287,000.

ALTERNATIVE C

This alternative would emphasize the preservation and protection of natural and cultural resources and scientific restoration of the tallgrass prairie. Visitor services and facilities would have the least possible impact on resources. Scientific management of the prairie ecosystem would take precedence over recreational use and interpretive access and minimize intrusive features on the park's landscape. Interpretive programs and visitors activities may limit physical access to historic structures to prevent the adverse impact of visitor use.

Estimated development costs of this alternative would total approximately \$5.0 million, including the rehabilitation of the Visitor Center, P.T. Smith house, and Varney house, and the construction of a new Maintenance Facility and a new Orientation Center near the Isaac Miles farm with new parking and road connections. These facility improvements and new construction would cost an additional \$10,000 a year to operate and maintain. This alternative would require 7.67 FTE of additional staff with an annual cost of \$292,000.

ALTERNATIVE D

This alternative would emphasize the accommodation of visitors with multiple opportunities to learn the entire meaning of Herbert Hoover's life story. The Historic Site would manage cultural and natural resources to support high levels of visitor access and use and interpretation and education programming of the park's historical significance.

Estimated development costs of this alternative would total approximately \$5.4 million, including the rehabilitation of the Visitor Center, P.T. Smith house, and Varney house; the construction of a new Maintenance Facility and a new Orientation Center with new parking and road connections; and the reconstruction of the House of the Maples. These facility improvements and new construction would cost an additional \$15,000 to operate and maintain. This alternative would require 9.67 FTE of additional staff with an annual cost of \$376,000.

ALTERNATIVE E (NO ACTION)

This alternative provided as a baseline for comparison, would maintain current resource and visitor experience conditions. Management of cultural and natural resources would remain reactive, rather than proactive. This alternative would not provide additional visitor services, nor build any new facilities. It would not meet all legal mandates. Where still suitable and feasible, the 1970 *Master Plan* and its 1978 *Addendum* would continue to provide primary management guidance. The Historic Site, however, would not carry out all of its recommendations.

This alternative would not include any facility development or rehabilitation, nor would it require additional staff.

SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES

Summary of Alternatives	Alternative A (Preferred)	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E (No Action)
Land Use and Management	Manage areas to emphasize commemoration of President Hoover.	Collaborate with HHPL to provide comprehensive overview of Herbert Hoover, Library more detailed.	Manage areas to emphasize preservation and protection of resources.	Manage areas to emphasize interpretation and visitor services, providing a high level of access and multiple opportunities.	Manage area to provide a sense of place and an understanding of Hoover.
Resource Management (Natural Resources)	Maintain current resource conditions; resources support commemoration. Minimize flood potential.	Maintain current resource conditions; resources support commemoration; protect visitor experiences from floods.	Scientific restoration of the prairie takes precedence over its interpretation; flooding managed completely through natural processes.	Maintain current resource conditions; resources support interpretation; protect media from floods.	Continue scientific restoration of the prairie. Maintain current condition of the creek. Take a reactive approach to creek flooding.
Resource Management (Historic Structures)	Preserve or rehabilitate structures to support commemoration; interpret the symbolism of buildings relocated to the site.	Preserve or rehabilitate structures to support commemoration; interpret the symbolism of buildings relocated to the site.	Study, preserve, and protect structures. Ensure that adapted use does not threaten structures. No reconstructions.	Prevent deterioration of existing conditions; use structures for interpretation; reconstruct House of the Maples for exhibits.	Maintain historic core to reflect Hoover's boyhood. Adaptive use of structures. Do not reconstruct House of Maples.
Resource Management (Cultural Landscape)	Preserve and rehabilitate to support commemoration as described in CLR; maintain visual connection of cottage and grave.	Preserve and rehabilitate to support commemoration as described in CLR; maintain visual connection of cottage and grave.	Preserve the period of significance. Maintain visual connection between cottage and grave.	Same as Alternative C.	Reflect the 1935-1966 sub-period of significance. Maintain formal landscape of the cottage and grave.
Visitor Use (Orientation).	Rehabilitate Visitor Center for improved orientation. Add waysides to park entrances focusing on the NHS and West Branch.	Move orientation to new Orientation Center near Miles Farm. Provide comprehensive orientation with HPPL & HPLA.	Move orientation to new Orientation Center near Miles Farm.	Move orientation to new Orientation Center near Miles Farm.	Emphasize Hoover's boyhood. Provide orientation at the Visitor center.

Continued	Alternative A (Preferred)	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E (No Action)
Visitor Use (Parking and Circulation)	Use existing parking facilities at HHPL, Visitor Center and Water Street Lot. Use existing streets and sidewalks.	Add parking and focus attention on new Orientation Center; build street from Center to HHPL; build new sidewalks from the Center to Downey Street, the HHPL, and Miles Farm.	Add parking and focus attention on new Orientation Center; build new sidewalks from the Center to Downey Street, the HHPL, and Miles Farm.	Add parking and focus attention on new Orientation Center; build street from Center to HHPL; build new sidewalks from the Center to Downey Street and the HHPL.	Use existing parking facilities at the HHPL, Visitor Center, and the Water Street Lot. Use existing streets and sidewalks.
Visitor Use (Interpretation Program)	Emphasize overall meaning of Hoover and links between his childhood and adult life; establish permanent museum exhibits at PT Smith Hse.	Emphasize overall meaning of Hoover and links between his childhood and adult life; establish special exhibits at P.T. Smith House.	Explain connection between Hoover's boyhood and his adult career; emphasize resources.	Provide comprehensive view of Hoover; establish exhibits in multiple locations.	Complement HHPL programs by emphasizing Hoover's boyhood.
Visitor Use (Education Program)	Use facility provided by park partner; emphasize significant lessons of Hoover's life.	Use facility provided by park partner; emphasize significant lessons of Hoover's life.	Use facility provided by park partner; emphasize the site's natural and cultural resources.	Build classroom and support facility in new Orientation Center to conduct a full program.	Present orientation programs in the Visitor Center; present guided tours of the Historic Site.
Recreation and Special Use	Ensure protection of resources and commemoration of Hoover.	Ensure protection of resources and commemoration of Hoover.	Ensure protection of resources and dignity of cottage and grave.	Ensure protection of resources and comprehensive understanding of Hoover.	Ensure protection of resources and preservation of the sense of place.
Park Operations (Staffing)	Fill some of vacant positions (2.92 FTE) 24.67 total FTE	Fill some of the vacant positions (3.92 FTE); add 3.75 FTE. 25.67 total FTE	Fill some of the vacant positions (5.67 FTE); add 2.00 FTE. 25.67 total FTE	Fill some of the vacant positions (3.92 FTE); add 5.75 FTE. 27.67 total FTE.	Do not fill any vacant positions. 18.0 total FTE.
Park Operations (Administration)	Use the Visitor Center, and the Laban Miles, Varney, Garvin, and C.E. Smith houses.	Use the Visitor Center, and the Laban Miles, Varney, Garvin, and C.E. Smith houses.	Use the Visitor Center, and the Varney, Garvin, Thompson, and C.E. Smith houses.	Use the Orientation Center, and the Varney, Garvin, Thompson, and C.E. Smith houses.	Use the Visitor Center, and the Varney, C.E. Smith, and Garvin houses.

Continued	Alternative A (Preferred)	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E (No Action)
General Development (Visitor Center)	Rehabilitate Visitor Center for services as above.	Construct new Orientation Center for orientation, fee collection, sales, museum exhibits, and special exhibits.	Construct new Orientation Center for orientation, fee collection, and sales; install special exhibits in P.T. Smith House and museum exhibits in Visitor Center.	Build new Orientation Center for orientation, fee collection, sales, and education. Install special exhibits in the P.T. Smith House, and museum exhibits in the "House of the Maples" and Visitor Center.	Use Visitor Center for fee collection, sales, orientation, education, museum exhibits, and special exhibits.
General Development (Maintenance Facility)	Construct new facilities and offices at Thomson Farm. Remove existing facility with exception of moving prefabricated building to Thompson Farm. Build service roads to Loop Road and Herbert Hoover Highway.	Construct new facilities and offices at Thomson Farm. Remove existing facility with exception of moving prefabricated building to Thompson Farm. Build service roads to Loop Road and Herbert Hoover Highway.	Construct new facilities and offices at Thomson Farm. Remove existing facility with exception of moving prefabricated building to Thompson Farm. Build service roads to Loop Road and Herbert Hoover Highway.	Construct new facilities and offices at Miles Farm. Remove existing facility with exception of moving prefabricated building to Miles Farm. Build service road to Loop Road.	Use existing Maintenance Facility and historic structures at the Miles Farm.
ESTIMATED COSTS (2001)					
	Alternative A (Preferred)	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E (No Action)
Recurring Operations	\$8,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$15,000	No additional costs
Staffing (recurring)	\$250,000	\$287,000	\$292,000	\$376,000	“
Development (one-time costs)	\$3,540,800	\$4,917,100	\$5,029,800	\$5,397,800	“